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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an imaginary conversation between an interviewer and the novelist, James Michener (1907-1997). Starting with Michener's early life experiences in Doylestown (Pennsylvania), the conversation includes his family's poverty, his wanderings across the United States, and his reading at the local public library. The dialogue includes his education at Swarthmore College (Pennsylvania), St. Andrews University (Scotland), Colorado State University (Fort Collins, Colorado) where he became a social studies teacher, and Harvard (Cambridge, Massachusetts) where he pursued, but did not complete, a Ph.D. in education. Michener's experiences as a textbook editor at Macmillan Publishers and in the U.S. Navy during World War II are part of the discourse. The exchange elaborates on how Michener began to write fiction, focuses on his great success as a writer, and notes that he and his wife donated over $100 million to educational institutions over the years. Lists five selected works about James Michener and provides a year-by-year Internet search on the author. (BT)

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James Albert Michener (1907-97): Educator, Textbook Editor, Journalist, Novelist, and Educational Philanthropist--An Imaginary Conversation.

Franklin Parker
Betty Parker

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"James Albert Michener (1907-97): Educator, Textbook Editor, Journalist, Novelist, and Educational Philanthropist. An Imaginary Conversation."
by Franklin Parker and Betty Parker

Note: The following imagined conversation with the late James Albert Michener explores the circumstances that made him a world renowned writer and best selling novelist. Was Michener's success due to talent, luck, or sheer pluck? (This imagined conversation was presented by the authors at Uplands Retirement Community, June 17, 2002, P.O. Box 100, Pleasant Hill, TN 38578. E-mail: bfparker@multipro.com).

QUESTIONER: Mr. Michener, you grew up an orphan in Doylestown, PA, north of Philadelphia, and were raised by a foster mother. True?

MICHENER: What I knew growing up was that my widowed mother, Mrs. Mabel Michener, took in orphans. My father Edwin Michener, died before I was born. My older brother was Robert. We were a poor but happy family.

QUESTIONER: You were 19, a freshman at Swarthmore College, when you were first told you were an illegitimate child. Who told you?

MICHENER: An uncle, Edwin Michener's brother, told me that Edwin Michener died five years before I was born.

QUESTIONER: What did Mabel Michener say?

MICHENER: That she took me in when I was a few weeks old without a name or birth certificate. She raised me as her son. Others later told me different versions of my birth. I never investigated them. Mabel Michener was the only mother I knew and loved.

QUESTIONER: She received little charitable help for her foster home; took in washing; sewed for people; cleaned houses for a realtor in order to live rent-free. What about when she was sick and couldn't feed you?

MICHENER: She left us temporarily with her sister whose husband worked at the Doylestown poorhouse, a dismal place.

QUESTIONER: Any bad memories of the poorhouse?

MICHENER: One old man committed suicide. I vowed to do anything to keep from ending up in such an ash heap.

QUESTIONER: At night Mabel Michener read aloud Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*; Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn, The Iliad*, and other poems. Her brother, your uncle, brought home an old Victrola and classical records.

MICHENER: She never earned enough to buy herself new clothes. But she shared with us great books, beautiful music, and love.

QUESTIONER: You early wondered far from home. Was it because you were curious about people and places?

MICHENER: I hitched barge rides on the Delaware River. I hitchhiked out of state with a friend or alone. I sent postcards home saying that I was o.k. I had hitchhiked to 45 states by age 18.

QUESTIONER: Here's an anonymous letter you received when a newspaper article appeared about you and your first book: "Dear Mr. 'Michener'??? You don't know who I am but I sure know who you are. You aren't a Michener and never were. You're a fraud to go around using that good name.... [Y]ou ought to be ashamed of yourself.... I'll be watching you, [signed] A real Michener."

MICHENER: I never bothered to find out who sent that letter and later hate mail.

QUESTIONER: Your male guidance included the two men who told you that the local poolroom was no place for you. And George C. Murray, a roofer, who started a boys' club where you played basketball. And high school coach Allen Gardy encouraged your basketball skill.

MICHENER: These men kept me and other boys out of trouble. Sports, school, and after school jobs kept me busy.

QUESTIONER: Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, also grew up in Doylestown?

MICHENER: She and I had the first library cards at the new public library. Since we'd read all the children's books, the librarian let us take out adult books.

QUESTIONER: Your classmate, Lester Trauch, described you thus: "[Jim Michener] was the poorest boy in school, but the brightest boy. He wore sneakers so worn his toes stuck out. He was not one of the gang, liked to be by himself, was obsessed with basketball, and never wasted a minute. He walked to school reading his lessons; read in the halls between classes. When the history teacher asked a question, Michener was the only one [who knew] the answer. He had done all this extra research. The teacher was fascinated, but we [kids] just laughed."

MICHENER: Mabel Michener kept me and my second hand clothes clean. Ridicule sometimes hurt but I put it behind me. Basketball and my sports articles helped. Our high school yearbook, *The Torch*, listed me as "the most talkative...most prompt...most original student."

QUESTIONER: Besides many after school jobs you were also a plumber's apprentice. Your uncle said: "Jim, you are going to be something better than a plumber." How did you get to Swarthmore College?

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MICHENER: My Latin teacher recommended me, and maybe helped me win a four year scholarship, 1925-29. I focused on study, books, and reading. For me, seeking independence, Swarthmore was ideal.

QUESTIONER: What pleased you most at Swarthmore?

MICHENER: Its Honors Program. I pursued my own last two-year self-directed program. I read English and American literary classics and wrote weekly papers.

QUESTIONER: You worked in the Swarthmore Chautauqua traveling adult program which offered lectures, operas, and plays?

MICHENER: Yes, the summer of 1928. I did various jobs and acted in plays. I worked nights at Swarthmore's Strath Haven Inn as watchman and switchboard operator. I worked summers at a Philadelphia amusement park, observed people, and saw carnival chicanery of all kinds.

QUESTIONER: You graduated from Swarthmore in June 1929, just before the Great Depression?

MICHENER: I taught English at a Quaker prep school, the Hill School, Pottstown, PA. I taught there two years, 1929-31, read a lot and dreamed of being a writer.

QUESTIONER: Why did you leave the Hill School?

MICHENER: Swarthmore awarded me its Lippincott Fellowship for study abroad.

QUESTIONER: You crossed the Atlantic and enrolled at St. Andrews University, Scotland.

MICHENER: I saw much poverty and many people on the dole in London, Glasgow, and Dundee. I traveled alone or with student groups in Europe.

QUESTIONER: You toured Italy to study art, learned about Mussolini's fascist regime, and toured Spain, France, Belgium, and other European countries.

MICHENER: I observed early fascism, Nazism, communism, and heard third world students complain about their colonial masters. I wasn't surprised when colonialism collapsed after World War II.

QUESTIONER: You went to a remote Scottish Island, Barra, in the Hebrides to collect old Celtic folk songs and legends. You traveled to Spain with bullfighters who performed in various towns.

MICHENER: A St. Andrews classmate told me that Dutch freighters sometimes hired students in

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exchange for a berth. I worked on a cargo ship in the Mediterranean and earned British merchant marine status.

QUESTIONER: The two years abroad heightened your wanderlust. What did you find on your return to the U.S. in the summer of 1933?

MICHENER: I saw apple sellers and soup lines in NYC. At 26, I taught English at the George School, a Quaker secondary school in Newtown, PA, not far from Doylestown.

QUESTIONER: You married Patti Koon while at the George School?

MICHENER: I met her while taking summer courses at the University of Virginia. We married July 27, 1935. We went together to the George School.

QUESTIONER: Why did you and Patti Koon leave the George School, June 1936, for the Colorado State College of Education at Greeley?

MICHENER: To teach social studies in the College High School and to study for a master's degree, which I received in June 1937. Colorado State was a progressive education college. It emphasized democratic values and the school's responsibility to help improve society. I also taught four college courses.

QUESTIONER: One Greeley colleague wrote: "[Michener] was one of the most dynamic educators I have known.... He stimulated youth to comprehend interrelationships] among all fields of knowledge."

MICHENER: The social studies looked at societal problems from historical, geographical, anthropological, and other viewpoints. I used this all-around approach in my 1959 novel *Hawaii*. At Greeley I learned of the opening of the American West, which I told in my 1974 novel, *Centennial*.

QUESTIONER: During the 1936-41 Greeley years you wrote 15 journal articles, edited one social studies book, co-authored another, and wrote an essay, "The Beginning Teacher," for a third book. Pretty good for a young educator. Did you write any fiction?

MICHENER: One short story, "Who is Virgil T. Fry?," in *Clearing House*, October 1941, a journal for high school teachers. It was about a teacher shunned by colleagues, fired by the school board, but beloved by students because he inspired them to learn.

QUESTIONER: Why did you leave Greeley? First for Harvard and then for Macmillan Publishing Company?

MICHENER: I took a leave of absence to lecture on the social studies at Harvard Graduate

School of Education and to pursue a Ph.D. degree in Education, which I did not complete. I returned to Greeley in 1941. Macmillan's high school textbook editor, visiting Greeley, wanted me to work for him. Editing and publishing, I thought, would get me closer to writing.

QUESTIONER: You were at Macmillan while Europe was plunged into World War II. Pearl Harbor was attacked. Patti Koon Michener joined the WACs. You entered the U.S. Navy?

MICHENER: I enlisted as an ordinary seaman in October 1942. In early 1943, at age 36, I was commissioned a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, received training at Dartmouth College, had assignments in the U.S., but kept asking to go to a combat zone.

QUESTIONER: Your small military group was transported to the South Pacific on a merchant marine ship. You never saw the captain, who was rumored to be drunk and in hiding. The unionized merchant marines ran the ship, ate the best food, and used most of the water. What happened?

MICHENER: One of our no-nonsense army captains at gun point forced our access to edible food and sufficient water. Before landing we ransacked the missing captain's quarters. My irascible bunkmate said: Michener, you talk about wanting to travel. I am typing our orders authorizing your official travel anywhere in the South Pacific, signed and stamped with an official seal.

QUESTIONER: Did the forged papers work?

MICHENER: Until I got the other bona fide U.S. Navy orders.

QUESTIONER: One of your Navy assignments was to thank with gifts, the native men who rescued downed American pilots. Getting to the appropriate island, you explained to a group of Melanesian people that you were looking for these native men. They laughed and pushed forward an older girl who had seen the downed plane, dragged the Americans out, and had hidden and fed them. Describe your mission to Bora Bora.

MICHENER: Military personnel are routinely returned to the U.S. after stipulated months in combat areas. On Bora Bora some enlisted men refused to go home. Others threatened mutiny if they were forced to leave. I had to investigate this unusual situation.

QUESTIONER: You described Bora Bora as the most beautiful island in the world and as close to paradise as men in this world ever get, that it was inhabited by beautiful Polynesian girls, that there was a party every night. There was dancing till dawn. There was good island food and a regular supply ship from the Sates once a month.

MICHENER: The base was efficiently run during the day. At night a skeleton crew took over. Men left the base by truck or jeep, dropping off one by one at the palm huts of their lovely

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Polynesian lady friends. Relationships had formed, children were born, all hush hush. I had to report on this sensitive situation.

QUESTIONER: You traveled by Navy planes or ships to 49 South Pacific Islands, covered about 150,000 miles, landed on hastily built air strips a few days after heavy fighting subsided. What made you finally draft your first book of fiction, *Tales of the South Pacific*?

MICHENER: Returning in the dark from a routine mission my pilot kept missing the poorly lit New Caledonia air strip. We braced for a crash landing, just made it, and were badly shaken. If I had died, I would have left nothing behind. I was approaching 40, mind you. That near crash prompted me to draft South Pacific stories running through my mind.

QUESTIONER: Your first draft was written on the island of Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, south of Guadalcanal, in a Quonset hut, by pecking at a typewriter with your two index fingers. What was the story line?

MICHENER: *Tales of the South Pacific* consisted of 18 loosely connected stories about the comedy, boredom, shenanigans of Navy life on a Pacific Island between military battles. The stories showed the interplay of Navy men, Navy nurses, and conniving natives; the funny aspects of military planes, jeeps, bulldozers, canned goods imposed on simple people living on beautiful islands.

QUESTIONER: You sent your draft to Macmillan, whose chief awaited your return. You delayed your return for a last tour of duty as Naval historian in the South Pacific. Did Macmillan accept your manuscript?

MICHENER: Yes, I was discharged from the U.S. Navy with the rank of Lieutenant Commander and returned to work at Macmillan in December 1945.

QUESTIONER: What happened to your wife, Patti Koon Michener?

MICHENER: We did not live together after the war. She returned to her South Carolina hometown. I lived in a Greenwich Village apartment, in Manhattan, near Macmillan, where I edited textbooks, and in spare time revised my *Tales of the South Pacific*.

QUESTIONER: *Tales* was to be published in 1946 but was delayed until February 1947, three years after you started it. Why the delay?

MICHENER: So that two of the 18 connected short stories could be published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, December 1946; January 1947. Had publication not been delayed to 1947, *Tales* would never have won the Pulitzer Prize.

QUESTIONER: *Tales* was little reviewed except by *New York Times* book reviewer Orville

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Prescott, who praised it. He wrote: "this long book of 18...linked short stories is, I am convinced, a substantial achievement which will make Mr. Michener famous...." Did Mabel Michener know of your success?

MICHENER: Sadly, when I came home from the war she was senile, did not know me, did not know I wrote a book. She died in March 1946.

QUESTIONER: You worked at Macmillan and in your spare time wrote your second book, an autobiographical novel, *The Fires of Spring*. Why were you slow to leave Macmillan for full time writing?

MICHENER: A survey showed the odds against freelance writing: one in 400 novels is published; one of every 2,000+ magazine articles submitted is accepted and paid for; the average full time novelist earned $1,800 a year. And so many people are trying to write the great American novel.

QUESTIONER: Then, on May 3, 1948, the Pulitzer Prize miracle happened.

MICHENER: I was at Macmillan editing a geography textbook with my senior colleague. The phone rang. He answered, listened, hung up, and said, "That was the Associated Press. *Tales of the South Pacific* just won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction."

QUESTIONER: You had no idea *Tales* was being considered, thought the phone call was a mistake? Why do you think it won?

MICHENER: I later heard that the Pulitzer selection chairman, *New York Times* correspondent Arthur Krock, received a phone call from Alice Roosevelt Longworth. She was Theodore Roosevelt's daughter, wife of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the matron of Washington, D.C. society. She asked Arthur Krock which 1947 novel was being considered. When told, she said: it does not compare to Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*. Krock immediately put copies of *Tales* into the hands of his committee members.

QUESTIONER: Arthur Krock later wrote: "I gave my reasons [for nominating *Tales*] and the Board accepted them.... That prize initiated the public and critical awareness of Michener that assured his subsequent literary prominence and success."

MICHENER: I met Alice Roosevelt Longworth at a swank dinner. She said: You certainly did well with that prize we gave you. You didn't let us down. It was daring of Krock to give you that award. Awards should be given to people at the start of their careers, not at the end. How can we be sure who will be a producer and who not? Thank you for making our gamble succeed.

QUESTIONER: In 1946 *Tales* would have lost to Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*. In 1948 it would have lost to James Gould Cozzens' *Guard of Honor*. It could only win in 1947

and then only because Alice Roosevelt Longworth intervened. How was *Tales* chosen as the source for the Broadway musical, *South Pacific*?

MICHENER: MGM studio heads saw no story line in *Tales*. The reader who had recommended it to MGM told stage designer Jo Mielziner that *Tales* had stage possibilities. Jo Mielziner got composer Richard Rodgers and lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II to read the book. They liked it and turned for help to stage director Joshua Logan and producer Leland Hayward, who got Enzio Pinza and Mary Martin in the cast.

QUESTIONER: *South Pacific* was a spirited musical and a compelling drama of U.S. sailors and Seabees awaiting a major battle against the Japanese on a South Sea island. There was the love affair of French planter Enzio Pinza with Navy nurse Mary Martin, and a Navy lieutenant with a Tonkenese girl. The action was rowdy, romantic, and tragic.

MICHENER: The music was uplifting; the songs magnificent: Imagine Enzio Pinza's, "Some Enchanted Evening." And Mary Martin's, "I'm Going to Wash that Man Right Out of My Hair." And "Bali Ha'i. Come Back, Come Back, to Bali Ha'i," that haunting melody that evoked the sun-setting beauty of the Pacific Islands. South Pacific had everything, even, "You've Got To Be Carefully Taught," pleading with adults not to pass their prejudices on to their children.

QUESTIONER: Rodgers and Hammerstein urged you to invest in the show as an angel. You had little money, had married again, and were building a home. So they lent you money to buy 6% interest in the show. *South Pacific* ran 1,925 performances, almost five years, and earned you about $10,000 annually. Now what about your second wife, Vange Nord?

MICHENER: We met at a NYC party. She worked in NYC as a researcher and wanted to write. We married September 2, 1948. I worked at Macmillan three days a week and wrote the rest of the time. Vange Nord supervised the building of our new home in Pipersville, PA, near Doylestown.

QUESTIONER: For what other reason was *South Pacific* so successful?

MICHENER: Americans like war-inspired dramas: There was *Floradora* after the Spanish American War; *What Price Glory?, All Quiet on the Western Front* after World War I; *Mister Roberts, South Pacific* after World War II.

QUESTIONER: Your literary agent Helen Strauss wrote this about you: "...[Michener] is a man of many moods and a loner, and his interests are varied. One might be put off by his reticence, but his modesty and humility are genuine."

MICHENER: Helen Strauss, great literary agent, got *Holiday* magazine editors to finance my 8-month 1949 return to the South Pacific for an article series on Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand. Random House published it as *Return to Paradise*, made into two motion pictures, one with

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Gary Cooper, the other with Paul Newman. She got me another later summer 1950 trip to write about Asia for *Life* magazine.

QUESTIONER: Your *Voice of Asia*, published in late 1951, was selected by the Literary Guild in 1952 and translated into 53 languages. Why this public interest in Asia?

MICHENER: The U.S. and USSR competed to win Asian loyalties. I wanted to write fiction but Strauss got me Cold War reportorial assignments. I went to Asia again the second half of 1952.

QUESTIONER: Strauss also put you in touch with *Reader's Digest* founder DeWitt Wallace?

MICHENER: I lunched with the DeWitt Wallaces summer 1952. We talked about the Korean War. I analyzed it for them. We hit it off.

QUESTIONER: The *Reader's Digest*, one of the world's most popular magazines, had 12 million circulation in the U.S. plus 37 foreign language editions. Its formula was: faith in God, family unity, patriotism, and the work ethic. Your biographer Hayes wrote: "If ever a magazine was designed for a writer, the *Reader's Digest* was designed for James A. Michener: teacher, patriot, student of the world, and optimist. The combination of magazine and writer was a perfect fit; one that has been rarely repeated in the history of publishing."

MICHENER: DeWitt Wallace wanted me to write exclusively for the *Reader's Digest*. Helen Strauss said that a freelance writer had to be completely free.

QUESTIONER: DeWitt Wallace then made you one of the most generous offers in publishing history. What was that offer?

MICHENER: He said: You can go anywhere in the world you want to go. You can write anything you want to write. We'll pay all your expenses, no matter where you go or what you do. You let us have first shot at what you've written. If we cannot use it, you can sell it elsewhere and you won't owe us a penny.

QUESTIONER: Besides factual writing about the Korean War for *Reader's Digest* you wrote a novel, *The Bridges of Toko'ri*, based on a real incident. It was published in *Life* magazine, then as a Random House book, and filmed with William Holden. What was the story line?

MICHENER: A World War II U.S. Navy Reserve pilot, happy with his family and civilian job, is brought back to fly a jet fighter in Korea. His mission: to bomb four vital Communist bridges in a narrow ravine at Toko'ri. He knows he is a sitting duck for enemy guns but executes the mission to defend American freedom.

QUESTIONER: You narrated "Appointment in Asia," a weekly half hour TV program for the State Department, were advisor to the Asia Foundation, and were asked to write about Asian

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problems for various agencies. Did Vange Nord Michener travel with you?

MICHENER: Less and less and then not at all. She wanted a writing career and a husband to help her. I was an absent husband constantly writing his next book. She asked for a divorce, which came in January 1955.

QUESTIONER: Your 1955 novel *Sayonara* was timely, about interracial marriage, Gis and Japanese girls, written just before you married your Japanese-American third wife. How did you meet Mari Yoriko Sabusawa?

MICHENER: At a Chicago luncheon, 1954. For *Life* magazine I interviewed a GI and his Tokyo-born war bride living in Chicago. At the luncheon Mari defended American-Japanese marriages, saying that most do succeed.

QUESTIONER: Mari was born in Colorado, 1920, of Japanese immigrants. The family moved to California. After Pearl Harbor, the family was interned. A relocation plan for Japanese-American students placed Mari in Antioch College, Ohio, where she received her degree. She then translated Japanese propaganda into English for a U.S. intelligence service.

MICHENER: She was editor of the American Library Association's *Bulletin* in Chicago when we met in 1954. She were married October 23, 1955 and had 39 glorious years together.

QUESTIONER: Your biographer Hayes thus described her: Mari regarded marriage as her career. She cared about his peace of mind. To see Jim Michener you first had to penetrate her protective wall.... She was his housekeeper, cook, secretary, travel agent, librarian, valet, hostess, chauffeur, and accountant. She freed him to work uninterrupted. He cherished her. *Mr. Michener, how were you and Mari involved in the October 1956 Hungarian revolt against the USSR? Why did you write *The Bridge at Andau*, 1957?

MICHENER: I was in Europe in 1956 with Mari. The *Reader's Digest* editor cabled me to cover the Hungarian revolt. I saw it as a harbinger of things to come. Soviet economics did not work. The USSR controlled Eastern Europe by force. On October 23, 1956, young Budapest dissidents, armed with sticks, stones, and Molotov cocktails, challenged Soviet tanks. Soviet reinforcements crushed the revolt, killed 80,000 Hungarians, forced 20,000 to flee, most of them over a bridge at Andau on the Austrian border. Mari, in Vienna, 50 miles away, made our home a way station for escaping Hungarians. I interviewed hundreds of them and helped some find residence in the U.S. and elsewhere.

QUESTIONER: Your biographer Hayes wrote this of your Hungarian experience: ... "Michener patrolled the border alongside ministers, rabbis, fellow journalists, and the interpreters who helped him interview refugees as they crossed the rickety wooden footpath...near Andau. Hundreds...who crossed the bridge received a card bearing Michener's address...and the promise of a hot meal...in exchange for their stories.... Many...wept for...their parents, children,

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countrymen...[left behind].... Michener...had never witnessed an event more brutal...."

MICHENER: World editions of *Reader's Digest*, March 1957, published a condensed version of *The Bridge at Andau*. Random House gave its profits to Hungarian relief. My royalties went to the Academy of Arts in Honolulu.

QUESTIONER: How did you feel about *The Bridge at Andau*?

MICHENER: It was a satisfying blow against Communism. I then determined to write epic novels, the first about Hawaii. In 1958 Mari and I moved to Waikiki.

QUESTIONER: The initial outline of your novel *Hawaii* shows its large scope, 1050 A.D. to 1954. You described minutely each incoming group: Polynesians, Japanese, and Filipinos through family stories, by generations, each a short novel in itself. Through successive characters you show the full range of Hawaiian history. *Mr. Michener, why was your novel about Hawaii timely?

MICHENER: Hawaii, like American, was a melting pot settled by immigrants. It was a bridge to Asia. It was ripe for statehood. It had little crime and good schools. It paid more in federal taxes than ten states. *Hawaii* was published just before statehood, rode a crest of publicity, and was number three best seller of 1959 novels.

QUESTIONER: A *Saturday Review* writer recorded this: "*Hawaii* is...a masterful job of research, an absorbing performance of story telling, and a monumental account of the islands from geologic birth to sociological emergency as the newest, and perhaps the most interesting of the United States." Your biographer Hayes quoted you as saying: "With *Hawaii* I finally found faith in myself as a writer...." Mr. Michener, why did you enter politics in the 1960s?

MICHENER: I was chairman of the Bucks County, PA, committee to elect John F. Kennedy in 1960. My mistake was to run in 1962 as a Democrat candidate for Congress. Wise Mari kept saying, "Don't do it, don't do it." I lost and went back to writing books.

QUESTIONER: What inspired your novel, *The Source*, published in 1965?

MICHENER: I was in the Mediterranean in April 1963 when I ran into the future mayor of Jerusalem. He asked me to write a book about Israel similar to my book on Hawaii.

QUESTIONER: You said it should be written by a Jew but you then and there outlined such a novel for him. He couldn't find a Jewish writer and urged you to do it. You said you'd do it if you received bibliographic help.

MICHENER: Mari and I moved to Israel in May 1963, read hundreds of books, and pondered how to capture the Holy Land's long, tempestuous history. I did it through one archaeological

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dig, or Tell, at Makor, which means "source," sifting 15 layers of civilization through fictional families, showing the socio-economic-religious interaction of Jews, Christians, and Arabs, through peace and war from Biblical times to modern Israel.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Michener, our time is almost gone. We've traced you to age 60. You lived 30 more years, wrote more books, had quadruple bypass heart surgery, a hip replacement, and 4 years of dialysis, as listed in the Chronology below. *Mr. Michener, you gave millions of readers pleasure, information, and hope. *Your tax advisor estimated that the U.S. spent $11,000 to educate you. You repaid society with over $68 million in income taxes. You and Mari (she died in 1994) donated over $100 million to educational institutions. Not bad for an orphan. Sleep well in your Austin, Texas grave. Sleep well.

Selected Works about James Albert Michener

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Internet

A computer Internet search under James Albert Michener (1907-79) using any major search engine (http://www.google.com or others) will uncover a wealth of pertinent material.

James Albert Michener (1907-97) Chronology of Career, Published Books, Honors

1907, allegedly born February 3, 1907, an orphan, raised in foster home run by Mabel (Haddon) Michener (d. 1946), Doylestown, PA (Bucks County).

1921-25, Doylestown High School, Associate Editor of *Torch*, 2 years; Editor-in-Chief, 1 year. Basketball. Class President.

1925-29, Swarthmore College, 4-year scholarship, Contributions to "Portfolio." Graduated with B.A. English & history, Summa Cum Laude.

1928, summer, traveled with Swarthmore Chautauqua group.

1929-31, teacher, The Hill School, Pottstown, PA (Quaker prep school).

1931-33, awarded Swarthmore's Joshua Lippincott Fellowship for study/travel abroad. Studied at St. Andrews University, Scotland. Traveled widely in Europe.

1933-36, teacher, The George School, Newtown, PA (Quaker prep school).

1935, Married Patti Koon (divorced 1948).

1936-39, Associate Professor, Colorado State College of Education, Greeley. M.A. in 1937.

1938-40, Co-founded Angells Club, a discussion group with Colorado State College of Education, Greeley faculty, and community members.

1939-40, Visiting lecturer, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University.

1939, Edited *The Future of the Social Studies* (National Council for the Social Studies).

1940, co-authored *The Unit in the Social Studies: Proposals for an Experimental Social Studies Curriculum* (Harvard University Press). Introductory essay, "The Beginning Teacher," 10th Yearbook of the NCSS (Harvard University Press). Fifteen journal articles published, 1936-41.

1940-41,

1942-46, U.S. Navy; sent to South Pacific, spring 1944.

1944-46, Naval historian, South Pacific; discharged with rank of Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy.

1946-49, Social Studies editor, Macmillan Publishing Co.

1947, *Tales of the South Pacific*, fiction, 18 connected short stories. Pulitzer Prize.

1948; Divorced by Patti Koon, married Vange Nord.

1949, *The Fires of Spring*, autobiographical novel (New York: Random House). *South Pacific*, Broadway stage musical.

1951, *Return to Paradise*, nonfiction, on Asian countries. *The Voice of Asia.*

1952-70, Roving editor, *Reader's Digest.*

1953, President of the Asia Institute; *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*, novel about Korean War.

1954, *Sayonara*, novel about U.S. military-Japanese marriage. *The Floating World.*

1955, Divorced by Vange Nord, married Mari Yoriko Sabusawa.

1956, Aided Hungarian refugees.

1957, Appointed to Federal Advisory Arts Commission. *The Bridge at Andau*, nonfiction, about 1956 Hungarian revolt against USSR rule. *Rascals in Paradise. Selected Writings of James A. Michener.*

1958, Overseas Press Club Award for *Reader's Digest* article on Andau (*The Bridge at Andau*). *The Hokusai Sketchbooks.*

1959, gave collection of Japanese prints to Honolulu Academy of Arts. *Hawaii, Japanese Prints: From the Early Masters to the Modern.*

1960, Chairman, Bucks County Citizens for Kennedy.

1961, *Report of the County Chairman* (Bucks County chairman to elect J. J. Kennedy). Appointed by President Kennedy to manage U.S. Food for Peace. Program failed.

1962, *Modern Japanese Prints.* Ran and lost as Democratic candidate for Congress from 8th District, PA.

1963, *Caravans*, novel. Helped establish Bucks County Arts Festival. Joined Americans for Permanent Peace in the Middle East. Received Einstein Award, Einstein Medical College.

1964, severe heart attack.

1965, *The Source*, novel about the Holy Land.

1967-68, President, Pennsylvania Electoral College.

1968, *Iberia*, story about Spain. Gave collection of contemporary American art to the University of Texas, Austin.

1969, *Presidential Lottery. The Reckless Gamble in Our Electoral System. The Quality of Life*, essays.

1970, *Facing East; The Quality of Life.* Gave $100,000 to Swarthmore College programs for black studies and race relations. American-Hungarian Studies Award from George Washington University.

1970-74, Member, U.S. Advisory Commission on Information. Gave $100,000 to Kent State University for arts program.

1971, *Kent State: What Happened and Why*, factual account. *The Drifters*, novel.

1972, Accompanied President Richard Nixon to China.

1973, *A Michener Miscellany, 1950-1970.* Editor, *Firstfruits.*

1974, *Centennial*, novel on Colorado and the U.S. West. *About Centennial.*

1975, Represented President Gerald Ford at Okinawa World Exposition. Appointed to the Bicentennial Advisory Committee and to Citizens Advisory [U.S.] Stamp Committee.

1976; *Sports in America.*

1977, Medal of Freedom Award presented by President Gerald Ford (highest award granted U.S. citizen). TV series programs, "The World of James A. Michener."

1978, *Chesapeake*, novel on colonial settlement of Maryland. Recipient of Pennsylvania Society Gold Medal.

1979, *The Watermen.* Member of NASA Advisory Council.

1980, *The Covenant*, novel on South Africa. *The Quality of Life.* Received the Franklin Award and the Spanish Institute Gold Medal. Gave $500,000 for the University of Iowa Writers Workshop.

1982, *Space*, novel, story of the U.S. space program.

1983, *Collector, Forgers – and a Writer. Poland*, novel. *Testimony.* Member of board for Radio Free Europe. Honored by the White House Arts Program for his financial assistance to artists.

1984, gave $2 million to Swarthmore College.

1985, Dedication of James A. Michener Arts Center, Bucks County, PA. Received Exemplar Award from Central Bucks Chamber of Commerce. *Texas*, novel (commissioned to celebrate the state's 75th birthday), covers 450 years of the region's history.

1987, *Legacy*, novel on the U.S. Constitution on its bicentennial.

1988, *Alaska*, novel.

1989, *Journey*, novel, an excised chapter from *Alaska* published separately, describing the 2,043-mile trek of 4 explorers across the Canadian Yukon. *Caribbean*, novel. *Six Days in Havana.*

1990, *The Eagle and the Raven. Pilgrimage.*

1991, *James A. Michener on the Social Studies; The Novel*, a novel. Gave $1 million to the University of Texas Graduate Writing program at the University of Houston. Gave $5 million to Swarthmore College. Named to the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Advisory Committee.

1992, *The World is My Home*, autobiography. *James A. Michener's Writer's Handbook on the South Pacific, as told by James A. Michener* [adaptation of the musical *South Pacific*], novel. *Mexico*, novel. *My Lost Mexico*, nonfiction. Gave $600,000 to the University of Northern Colorado Library. *James A. Michener's Writer's Handbook: Explorations in Writing and Publishing*, nonfiction.

1993, *Creatures of the Kingdom*, novel. *Literary Reflections: Michener on Michener, Hemingway, Capote, and Others* (criticism) 1993.

1994, Mari Michener died. *Recessional*, novel about aging. *William Penn*. Pledged $5 million each to art museums in Doylestown, Pennsylvania and Texas.

1995, *Miracle in Seville*. *Ventures in Editing*.

1996, *The Genius Belt: The Story of the Arts in Bucks County*, nonfiction. *This Noble Land: My Vision for America*, nonfiction. Named Outstanding Philanthropist by the National Society of Fund Raising Executives.

1997, October 16, Michener died; buried in Austin, Texas. (Michener received more than 30 honorary doctorates in Humane Letters Law, Theology, and Science.)

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